

CONCEPT 6: AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE IN THE DELTA

GOAL

As in concept 5 the goal of this concept is to lay groundwork for the implementation of section 1104 of the Delta Initiatives legislation, which calls for recommendations for establishing an African-American Heritage Corridor and Cultural Center in the Delta.

By using a “hub-and-spoke” configuration to identify the stories and resources related to African-American heritage in the Delta, this configuration enables a comprehensive presentation of the people, events, and places important for understanding the evolution of the Delta’s African-American culture and communities. Major interpretive centers (museums, visitor centers, or community centers) would serve as hubs where visitors would be introduced to the broad spectrum of African-American life in the Delta and would then be directed to “spoke” sites — other museums, historic sites, and/or communities that would give an in-depth interpretation of one or more African-American stories found in the Delta.

IMPORTANCE/SIGNIFICANCE

Any study of the cultural heritage of the Lower Mississippi Delta must include a study of the history of the region’s African-American citizens. Brought to the Delta in slavery, forced to work in bondage and servitude throughout the antebellum years, and freed only with the catastrophe of the Civil War, African-Americans form the very fiber of the social and political tapestry of the Delta. Their lives, as enslaved people, free people of color, entrepreneurs, inventors, and men and women of science, victims of Jim Crow and the KKK, leaders and travelers on the Underground Railroad, Civil Rights activists who gave their lives for the cause, sharecroppers and landowners, farmers and business people, the poor in a wealthy land — all these stories and more are the stories of the lives of African-Americans in the Delta.

To commemorate the lives and achievements of African-Americans in the Delta, this concept addresses the need to put in place a

series of resource sites that directly reflect the important lives and events in African-American history in the Delta. An African-American Heritage Corridor reaching from the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers at Cairo, Illinois, in the north to New Orleans, Louisiana, near the mouth of the river in the south could begin to give visitors an understanding of the complexity of the social interactions, political struggles, and rich cultural legacy that touches all aspects of Delta life.

RESOURCES

A variety of cultural and natural resources would be used to implement this concept. National historic landmarks, historic districts, rural community centers, museums, and historic sites would all be considered important for preserving, protecting, and presenting African-American heritage in the Delta.

Criteria would be established for choosing the appropriate resources for the “hub” sites, in consultation with state and local preservation and African-American community groups. The criteria might include: significance/importance of the site/resource in African-American history; ability of the site/resource to convey multiple stories related to African-American life in the Delta; access to major transportation routes or along important historic migration routes related to African-American heritage; access to other “hub-and-spoke” sites/resources in the Delta; local community support to sustain a major interpretive center.

Further, more site specific planning would need to be accomplished to establish the criteria, identify sites and resources, and delineate the most appropriate configuration of the corridor. The work would be done in consultation with local African-American communities, businesses, and preservation groups resident in the Delta.

RESOURCES

Hub Sites (Sites/resources to be determined)

1. Cairo, Illinois
2. Little Rock, Arkansas
3. Memphis, Tennessee
4. Helena, Arkansas
5. Mound Bayou, Mississippi
6. Monroe, Louisiana
7. Natchitoches, Louisiana
8. Alcorn, Mississippi
9. Jackson, Mississippi
10. New Orleans, Louisiana

Spoke Sites (Possible sites/resources)

Arkansas

1. Jonesboro
2. Madison
3. Fargo (Floyd Brown-Fargo Agricultural School Museum)
4. Smackover (Arkansas Oil and Brine Museum)
5. Springhill (Shiloh Museum)
6. Little Rock (Arkansas Baptist College)
7. North Little Rock (Philander Smith College)
8. North Little Rock (Shorter College)
9. Pine Bluff (University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff)

Illinois

10. Sparta (A.A. Burlingame House)

Kentucky

11. Hopkinsville (Poston House)
12. Hickman (Thomas Chapel CME Church)
13. Paducah (Artelia Anderson Hall)

Tennessee

14. Henning (W. E. Palmer House)
15. Fort Pillow (Fort Pillow)
16. Jackson (Lane College Historic District)
17. Memphis (Beale Street Historic District)
18. Memphis (Mason Temple, Church of God In Christ)
19. Memphis (South Main Street Historic District)
20. Memphis (Steele Hall, LeMoyne-Owen College Campus)
21. Memphis (Zion Cemetery)

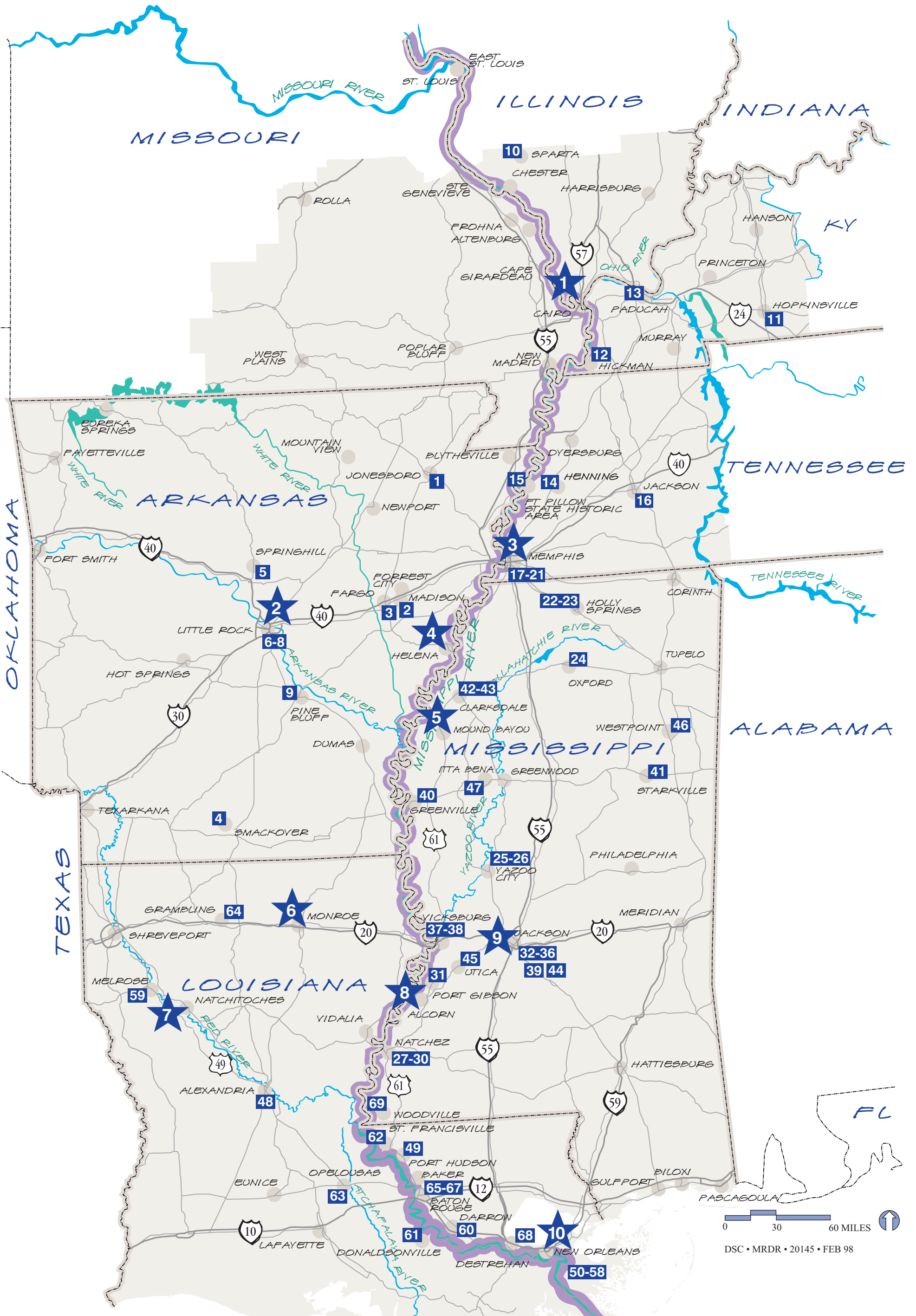
Mississippi

22. Holly Springs (Rust College)
23. Holly Springs (Mississippi Industrial College Historic District)
24. Oxford (University of Mississippi)
25. Yazoo City (Triangle Cultural Center)
26. Yazoo City (Historic District)

27. Natchez (China Grove Plantation)
28. Natchez (Glen Aubin)
29. Natchez (William Johnson House - Natchez National Historical Park)
30. Natchez (Smith-Bontura-Evans House)
31. Port Gibson (Golden West Cemetery)
32. Jackson (Farish Street Neighborhood Historic District)
33. Jackson (Mississippi State Capitol)
34. Jackson (West Capitol Street Historic District)
35. Jackson (Alex Williams House)
36. Tougaloo (John W. Boddie House, Tougaloo College campus)
37. Vicksburg (Beulah Cemetery)
38. Vicksburg (The Jacqueline House)
39. Jackson (Margaret Walker Alexander National African-American Research Center)
40. Greenville (Flowing Fountain)
41. Starkville (Oddfellows Cemetery)
42. Clarksdale (Coahoma Junior College)
43. Clarksdale (Clarksdale Blues Museum)
44. Jackson (Jackson State University)
45. Utica (Hines Community College)
46. West Point (Mary Holmes College)
47. Itta Bena (Mississippi Valley State University)
69. Woodville (William Grant Still; Woodville Historical Museum; Jefferson Davis)

Louisiana

48. Alexandria (Arna Bontemps African American Museum)
49. Port Hudson (Civil War Sites)
50. New Orleans (Southern University)
51. New Orleans (Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve)
52. New Orleans (Jazz National Historical Park)
53. New Orleans (Congo Square)
54. New Orleans (Flint-Goodridge Hospital of Dillard University)
55. New Orleans (Black Arts National Diaspora, Inc.)
56. New Orleans (Xavier University)
57. New Orleans (The French Market)
58. New Orleans (Louis Armstrong Park)
59. Melrose (Melrose Plantation)
60. Arrow (River Road African American Museum)
61. Donaldsonville (Benevolent Societies)
62. St. Francisville (Rosedown Baptist Church)
63. Opelousas (Home of Zydeco music)
64. Grambling (Grambling State University)
65. Baton Rouge (Southern University A&M)
66. Baton Rouge (LSU Rural Life Museum)
67. Baton Rouge (Tabby's Blues Box & Heritage Hall)
68. Destrehan (Destrehan Plantation)



★ HUBS
1-69 SPOKES

Lower Mississippi
Delta Region
HERITAGE STUDY

CONCEPT 6
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE
IN THE DELTA